



Statistics show that about 50 percent of Americans are overweight. For many, the struggle with their weight began during adolescence. Therefore, healthy weight management during the teenage years is important in developing good habits that become a way of life.

What is a healthy weight?

There are many pieces to the puzzle that determines the amount of weight your body can comfortably carry.

- ♦ Genes (information in your body)
- ♦ Frame size
- ♦ Amount of exercise
- ♦ Muscle to fat ratio - muscle burns more calories than fat



Remember: A healthy weight is not the lowest weight, but the best weight for your body.

Keys to healthy weight: Good habits

Put yourself on track with good habits as a teenager and you will never as an adult ride the "diet roller coaster" of up and down weight fluctuations.

- ♦ **Exercise:** Exercise burns calories, suppresses the appetite, boosts your energy level, and helps you feel better. Choose an exercise that you enjoy doing for about 45 minutes a day four to five times a week.
- ♦ **Start the day right:** Take time to eat a healthy breakfast and you will feel less hungry throughout the day.
- ♦ **Be aware of what you eat:** Avoid "mindless eating."
 - ✓ Grabbing food on the run
 - ✓ Eating when you are bored
 - ✓ Snacking because everyone else does
 Try keeping a food diary of what you eat in the day.
- ♦ **Eat what you like:** Include your favorite foods in your meals occasionally... just be aware of portion size.
- ♦ **Focus on complex carbohydrates:** These foods are low in fat, rich in vitamins and minerals, and high in fiber, which means you can feel full on fewer calories. Focus on eating whole-grain cereals, rice, beans, breads, pasta, and fruits and vegetables.
- ♦ **Drink plenty of fluids, especially water.**

Fad diets: Quick Fix

Studies show that people who repeatedly go on and off fad diets actually gain weight over time. In fact, the only thing fad dieters learn is how to starve! How do you evaluate weight-loss plans to know what is safe and what is not? Before following any plan, check with your doctor. Then ask yourself these questions:



- ♦ Is the diet extremely low in calories?

Very low-calorie diets may deprive you of essential nutrients, stunt your growth, and do not help you learn good habits that will result in a lifetime of healthy weight. In addition, current research shows that the body interprets an extremely low-calorie diet as starvation and responds by burning calories more slowly. People who are most successful at losing weight--and keeping it off--lose one to two pounds per week.

- ♦ Could you follow the plan for more than a few weeks?

- ♦ Is it nutritious?

- ♦ Does it fit your lifestyle?



- ♦ Is the plan based on foods you eat and enjoy?

A plan based on unusual foods or foods you have to purchase at specialty stores may be very expensive and does little to help you learn good habits. As soon as you go off the plan, you will tend to revert to former habits and gain weight.

Web sites related to HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT:

The American Dietetic Association: www.eatright.org

Gwinnett County School Nutrition Program: www.gcsnp.org

GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

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